

So, Mr. President, perhaps I am just venting frustration, but I believe a lot of others share those frustrations. I hope that in some way I am representing the frustrations of the farmers I represent, because they are frustrated. They do not know what to expect. They would like to have a little certainty, too. Right now, all we are giving them is uncertainty. If we adjourn for a month tonight, they have another month of uncertainty. It is unfair and unconscionable that we would walk out of this place tonight and adjourn without having a full, fair, and open debate on amendments to a farm bill, which cannot take place in 3 hours tonight. It may take tomorrow and it might take Monday. That is fair. I do not know how many days the 1990 farm bill took. I am informed that it took 7 days. The 1985 farm bill took about the same amount of time. We had the telecom bill. How many days did that take? I think a couple of weeks. The farm bill is every bit as important to our farmers as the telecom bill is to the people in telecommunications. I do not think the farm bill needs 7 days, but at least 2 or 3 days, to debate and amend it and have final passage. I do not see why we cannot do that tomorrow, Monday, and Tuesday. There is no reason we cannot do it.

I yield the floor.

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for approximately 5 minutes on the matter of the agricultural bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, I have listened to my distinguished colleague from the neighboring State of Iowa. I want to share with the Senate the fact that my frustrations run very deep, as deep as so eloquently expressed by my colleague from the State of Iowa, Senator HARKIN.

Here we are, Mr. President, 10 minutes after 7:00 on the 1st day of February, and there is rapid talk in this body about adjourning this evening until sometime around February 28. Now, obviously, adjourning here without taking any action whatever on a farm bill is not only wrong, it is not only bad policy, but it is ridiculous.

How do we work ourselves out of the dilemma we find ourselves in right now? Mr. President, it would seem to me that it would be a time for cooler heads to prevail. I think we have two basic options: Either we stay here and

work and not adjourn, as has been contemplated, and I suspect that would be the best possible course of action of all the options that we have; or the second option, it seems to me, would be if we are going to adjourn tonight, and if we adjourn I suspect we will have a roll-call vote on adjournment so that we will all know in this body and elsewhere as to who wanted to adjourn when we have important work that we should remain here doing. The other option of not staying here, if we are bound and determined to adjourn, which I will oppose, but if that happens, we are going to leave here without any resolution whatever on the farm bill, would be the worse of all possible worlds. If we are not going to continue to stay here and work and hammer out a compromise of some kind, then I think the next best option would be for a simple 1-year extension of the present farm bill.

The only significant changes that I suggest that we should make in that regard is to accept and provide a simplification of the rules, regulations, and red tape, and truly allow the farmers of America, for the most part, to farm for the 1996 year without all of the complicated restraints that they have. I simply say the simplification of the rules and allowing the farmers more freedom is one part of the Freedom to Farm Act that I generally have supported.

I hope that all would realize and recognize that we either have the option of trying to work out something tonight, which I think is going to be extremely difficult. If we cannot do that, I think we should schedule to be here tomorrow and Saturday, if necessary, and again next week, in an effort to try and come to some kind of a workable compromise that can get the required number of votes, and/or tonight stand to face reality and say it is going to be very difficult to come to some kind of an agreement. Probably the best thing for all sides to do would simply be to recognize and realize that the best thing to do under the circumstances in consideration to the farmers of America, who are anxiously awaiting what we are going to do here with regard to a farm bill, is to have a 1-year extension of the present farm bill with the caveats I have just expressed.

Mr. President, it seems to me, therefore, we once again are up against time constraints—some of them real, some of them imaginary. By and large, I see no reason why we should be adjourning when we should be here working. If adjournment is the way we are going to go, I appeal for all sides to realize and recognize, in the interests of agriculture, while extending the present farm bill for 1 year is not the way I would like to go, it may be the only way for us to go and provide a measure of assurance to the food producers of America that we do, indeed, care and appreciate what they are going through.

Here we are in February talking about a farm bill that should have been

passed no later than the beginning of the new fiscal year last October 1. Here we are, Mr. President, as the ranking Democrat on the Budget Committee, starting to make plans for the budget discussions in 1996, and we have not even finished the budget from last year. We are sadly behind what we should be doing—doing it right or wrong.

I think that, by and large, most of the minority, and I hope a large portion of the majority, in the Senate would realize it is time to fish or cut bait. If we cannot come to an agreement, I suggest it would make sense and be reasonable for all sides to agree to an extension of 1 year, with the caveats I have outlined.

FEDERAL TEA TASTERS REPEAL ACT OF 1996

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of calendar 306, S. 1518.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1518) to eliminate the Board of Tea Experts by prohibiting funding for the Board and by repealing the Tea Importation Act of 1897.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. DOLE. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be deemed read a third time, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements be placed at the appropriate place in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

So the bill (S. 1518) was deemed read the third time and passed, as follows:

S. 1518

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Federal Tea Tasters Repeal Act of 1996".

SEC. 2. PROHIBITION OF FUNDING.

None of the funds appropriated or made available to the Federal Drug Administration shall be used to operate the Board of Tea Experts and related activities.

SEC. 3. REPEAL OF TEA IMPORTATION ACT OF 1897.

The Tea Importation Act (21 U.S.C. 41 et seq.) is repealed.

SEC. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act.

AWARDING THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL TO RUTH AND BILLY GRAHAM

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 2657 just received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2657) to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Ruth and Billy Graham.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 3315

(Purpose: To strike section 5 of the bill)

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk on behalf of Senator FAIRCLOTH and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kansas [Mr. DOLE], for Mr. FAIRCLOTH, proposes an amendment numbered 3315.

Mr. DOLE. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

On page 4, following the period on line 7, strike all that follows:

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be agreed to, that the bill be deemed read a third time and passed, as amended, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill appear at the appropriate place in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 3315) was agreed to.

The bill (H.R. 2657) was deemed read the third time and passed.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, let me indicate, while we are waiting for another matter here, we have not been able to reach an agreement on the farm bill. We have had discussions throughout the day. We have had one cloture vote.

What I would propose we do is postpone that cloture vote until after the leaders have conferred on Tuesday and, hopefully by that time, get some paper out there so that people can see what is proposed by Members on each side; if we cannot get an agreement, then have that cloture vote Tuesday and decide what to do after that. But I know there are Members probably waiting around in their offices. I would say there will probably be no further votes this evening, but there may be votes on next Tuesday. We will go out tonight and over until Tuesday; pro forma Monday.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I want to commend those who have been involved in these discussions. I think we have made a lot of progress in the last

several hours. We just had a caucus. I think it is fair to say that much of what we reported to them was very well received. I think the question is whether or not, without having finalized the agreement and without knowing for sure just how it all affects current law, whether or not we are in a position yet tonight to come to closure.

I think we are getting closer. I hope we can continue these negotiations, have an agreement that we could send out to everybody so in the next couple of days they could take a look at it, and then have a vote within a very limited timeframe on Tuesday. I would like to see if we can finish this on Tuesday and limit the votes and try to move this process along.

So, I share the leader's desire to come to closure and his expressed hope that we could do it as early as next Tuesday.

Mr. CRAIG. Will the leader yield?

Mr. DOLE. I will be happy to yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

A CLEAR FARM POLICY

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I think I and a lot of other Senators are very frustrated at this moment as we have tried to move this issue over the last several weeks.

All of us agree that the agricultural community deserves to hear a clear message from the Congress of the United States that relates to farm policy. I am terribly disappointed that this afternoon we could not gain cloture, that the other side chose to kill freedom to farm. We also put up an excellent alternative to that and that—we could not work with that issue.

Obviously, farm policy in its formation has always been bipartisan. I was confident this afternoon, or at least I thought I could be, that we had worked for several days to build that bipartisan compromise and still maintain the kind of levels of expenditure that sent a clear message to American agriculture that there would be some safety nets but, at the same time, that they were going to move toward the market as they have told us—week after week, month after month, as we have held hearings in the Senate Agriculture Committee this year—that a reinstatement of current policy simply would not work anymore and it should not work.

While I know none of us at this moment are working on a reinstatement of current policy, I am very concerned to see us edging back toward it at a time when agriculture has said to us that is not where we ought to head.

So I hope we can arrive at something over the weekend and into next week. It is my understanding the House may not be able to get there, as we had hoped, so we could at least show the American farm community a timetable that we are all going to be sensitive to. But I am disappointed, and I think we all are, that this cannot be resolved in the fashion we had hoped.

I am going to have to, as I think others on this side are, look a great deal more closely at the deals that are being put together. We, in my opinion—certainly from this Senator's point of view—have gone as far as I know is possible to go without saying to Idaho agriculture we have decided not to do what we told you we were going to do and what most of you had agreed to. I presented legislation yesterday that had the full endorsement of the American Farm Bureau and a variety of other organizations, wheat growers, corn growers and others. I had hoped we could arrive at that in a timely fashion.

It appears we are not there. I hope we are closer than I am led to believe we might be. But, to the leader who, I know, has worked today, and the minority leader, I hope we can get this accomplished and the final plans worked out. Timing is of the essence, that we resolve it. It should have been resolved today.

TEMPORARY EXTENSION IN STATUTORY DEBT LIMIT

Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President, H.R. 2924 is, in effect, a temporary increase in the debt ceiling.

Under the bill, the Secretary of the Treasury may issue Treasury securities in excess of the current \$4.9 trillion ceiling in order to pay the March 1996 Social Security benefits. Coupled with the normal end of month redeeming of Treasury securities held by the Social Security trust funds, this bill permits the Federal Government to meet all of its financial obligations on March 1.

The bill provides much-needed time to consider a longer and perhaps permanent increase in the debt ceiling. Congress may not take up this issue again until the week of February 26, and, without this legislation, action would be required almost immediately to prevent default on February 29 or March 1. That is cutting it too close. Under this bill, we will have until March 15 to work out a long-term increase in the debt ceiling.

And, importantly, this legislation commits the Congress to timely action. Item 1 in the bill's "FINDINGS" states:

(1) Congress intends to pass an increase in the public debt limit before March 1, 1996.

This is a welcome statement of good faith. It will shortly pass the House of Representatives. I urge the Senate to concur.

GUARANTEEING THE TIMELY PAYMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS IN MARCH 1996

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 1555, introduced today by Senators ROTH and DOLE, and that the bill be considered read a third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.